

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00
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O 061400Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8576
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 3757

THIS IS A JOINT STATE-DEFENSE MESSAGE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS, IS, LE
SUBJ: ISRAELI MILITARY AIRCRAFT OVERFLIGHT OF WEST BEIRUT

1. BBC 1400 LOCAL REPORTED THAT ISRAELI GOVERNMENT HAS CONFIRMED THAT ISRAELI RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT FLEW OVER WEST BEIRUT THIS MORNING.
 2. EVENT CAUSED OUTBREAK OF PANIC IN VARIOUS PLACES IN BEIRUT AND WILD, CONTRADICTORY RUMORS ABOUT WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED. FRENCH EMBASSY HERE WAS CONVINCED THAT PLANES DROPPED TWO BOMBS, ONE NEAR FRENCH AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE AND ONE IN AREA OF SABRA PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMP, AND HAS SO REPORTED TO PARIS. ANOTHER STORY BREWED ABOUT IS THAT PLANE (OR PLANES) STRAFFED A SYRIAN POSITION NEAR SABRA WITH MACHINE
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GUN FIRE. PHALANGIST "VOICE OF LEBANON" RADIO AT 1300 LOCAL REPORTED THAT NO LESS THAN SEVEN ISRAELI PLANES HAD FLOWN OVER WEST BEIRUT. MOURABITOUN RADIO, "VOICE OF THE ARABS", REPORTED THAT ISRAELIS "BOMBED" BOTH SABRA CAMP AND THE NEARBY CITE SPORTIVE. VARIOUS REPORTS WE HAVE RECEIVED INDICATE THAT OVERFLIGHT PRODUCED WIDESPREAD PANIC, TRAFFIC JAMS AND TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS IN THE RAMLET EL BAIDA AREA AND

ON THE CORNICHE MAZRAA.

3. OUR OWN OBSERVATION FROM THE EMBASSY ITSELF, IS THAT TWO AIRCRAFT OVERFLEW WEST BEIRUT, BREAKING THE SOUND BARRIER. VARIOUS INDIVIDUALS OCCUPYING VANTAGE POINTS FROM WHICH BOMBINGS COULD HAVE BEEN OBSERVED TELL US THAT NONE OCCURRED. A RELIABLE PALESTINIAN SOURCE IN SABRA ITSELF TOLD SWEDISH CHARGE THAT NO BOMBS WERE DROPPED, BUT THAT PALESTINIANS DID FIRE ANTI-AIRCRAFT ARTILLERY AT THE PLANES. FRENCH EMBASSY SAYS PLANES WERE MIRAGES; AN MEA PILOT WHO OBSERVED THEM SAYS THEY WERE F-4'S.

4. COMMENT: THE AIRCRAFT OVERFLEW BEIRUT AT LOW ALTITUDE AND HIGH SPEED PERHAPS FOR RECONNAISSANCE AS WELL AS TO LEND MORAL BOOST TO THE CHRISTIANS (SEE PHALANGE RADIO REPORT - PARA 2 ABOVE) AND, PERHAPS, TO INTIMIDATE THE SYRIANS. THE ISRAELIS SENT A SIGNAL OF THEIR "CONCERN" FOR THE CHRISTIANS; PRIMARILY RESULT WILL BE TO ENCOURAGE THE CHRISTIANS TO OPPOSE THE SYRIANS MORE STRONGLY WITH THE BELIEF THAT THE ISRAELIS WILL COME TO THEIR ASSISTANCE. PARKER

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